

PR 7611



BOOKER LITTLE / MAL WALDRON / RICHARD DAVIS / EDDIE BLACKWELL

ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT, VOL. 1



DESIGN / PHOTO: DON SCHLITTE

ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT, VOL. 1



PRESTIGE 7611

ERIC DOLPHY, alto sax, bass clarinet
BOOKER LITTLE, trumpet
MAL WALDRON, piano
RICHARD DAVIS, bass
EDDIE BLACKWELL, drums

Side A

1. FIRE WALTZ 13:30
2. BEE VAMP 13:00

Side B

1. THE PROPHET 21:20

Eric Dolphy and Booker Little were two of the most significant figures in jazz, and both were robbed of the full exposition of their talents by premature death. Booker Little died of Uraemia in October of 1961 at the age of twenty-three. Dolphy died of a heart attack compounded by diabetes in June of 1964 at the age of thirty-six.

Eric Dolphy stood out as one of the most influential and inventive reedmen in an era rich with great saxophonists. His alto style was a rapid, searing, screaming sound that approximated the human voice in all of its emotions, and it was a natural extension of Charlie Parker's approach both harmonically and stylistically. On this saxophone he influenced a host of bright, young altoists including James Spaulding, Robin Kenyatta, Ken McIntyre and Eric Kloss. He reintroduced the bass clarinet (once the sole territory of Harry Carney) into the jazz world with a jagged and crying, yet delicate and deep, style. Dolphy was probably the first flautist to apply that instrument to jazz with the legitimate tone and technique of a classical player. His most conventional playing was done on this instrument, one with which he projects great, delicate beauty, exquisite melodicism and thrilling technique. But on all three instruments (and B flat clarinet which he used on occasion), he maintained a warmth, creativity and consistency unsurpassed by any player of this music called jazz. He was also one of the few jazzmen to brave the unaccompanied solo, a format which Coleman Hawkins initiated with his *Picasso* and which Sonny Rollins and Lee Konitz have used through the years.

The great Booker Little was one of the most important innovators on his instrument, sharing with Lee Morgan and Blue Mitchell the honor of inspiring that whole school of trumpeters which stem from Clifford Brown and include Freddie Hubbard, Carmell Jones, Woody Shaw, and Charles Tolliver. Equipped with a broad classical training, he pursued a quick, melodic, free style that opened new tonal areas and new attitudes toward improvisation on the trumpet. Dolphy later remarked of him, "Booker was one of the true giants and geniuses' that was never recognized while he was alive."

Little and Dolphy shared many of the same musical values including an interest in the tones that lie between the whole and half steps that restrict our Western musi-

cal system. Some quotes from Booker Little's interview in the defunct *Metronome* magazine could easily speak for both of them: "I think the emotional aspect of music is the most important. . . . Those who have no idea how classical music is constructed are definitely at a loss—it's a definite foundation. . . . I can't think in terms of wrong notes—in fact, I don't hear any notes as being wrong. It's a matter of knowing how to integrate the notes and, if you must, resolve them. . . . I'm interested in putting sounds against sounds and I'm interested in freedom also. But I have a respect for form. . . . In my own work I'm particularly interested in the possibilities of dissonance. If it's a consonant sound, it's going to sound smaller. The more dissonance, the bigger the sound. It sounds like more horns; in fact, you can't always tell how many there are. And your shadings can be more varied. Dissonance is a tool to achieve these things."

While their trumpet-alto counterparts, the team of Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry, chose to abandon most form and return simplistically and melodically to the roots of music, Little and Dolphy worked at extending and expanding upon the music of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Clifford Brown. Unfortunately their musical collaboration produced only three studio record dates (one by Booker on the defunct *Candid* label, one by Max Roach and Dolphy's *Far Cry* on *Prestige*) and a two week engagement at the old Five Spot Cafe in July of 1961. On July 16, the *Prestige* crew was present to capture several hours of this great group. The music has been made available on four Eric Dolphy albums: *Here And There* (PR 7382), *The Memorial Album* (PR 7334), *At The Five Spot, Volume Two* (PR 7294) and this particular reissue of *At The Five Spot, Volume One*.

On that mid-summer's night, a celebrated group of musicians and jazz people along with an unsuspecting and sympathetic audience, transformed the club into a private party. The old Five Spot (situated in the East Village before that locale was so-named 'in') was quite conducive to the intimate and creative atmosphere and had long been a home for such jazz revolutionaries as Thelonious Monk, Steve Lacy, George Russell, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman.

When this recording was made, Eric Dolphy had attained notice, both pro and con, during his tenures with Charles Mingus and Chico Hamilton. His associations with the late John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Gunther Schuller, and John Lewis' Orchestra U.S.A. were yet to come. Booker Little, championed as the next great trumpet voice by a perceptive few, had reached the public eye through his long standing position with Max Roach's quintet. He was to die just four months after these live recordings were made.

About this particular Five Spot session, Dolphy remarked, "I think the rhythm section was very good. There were three different kinds of cats and everybody was listening very closely to everybody else—everything balanced." Leading that section was pianist-composer Mal Waldron, currently living in Italy after years of neglect in his own country. His playing with Max Roach, Charles Mingus, Dolphy, Teddy Charles and others was always interesting and quite original. He composed for

many jazz groups, wrote several film scores including *The Cool World* and *Sweet Love, Bitter*, and served as Billie Holiday's accompanist during her final, performing years.

Bassist Richard Davis has grown to such proportions and popularity since this recording that a biography seems unnecessary. Suffice it to say that he is equally brilliant with a symphony orchestra, a swing jazz group and an avant garde group. His personal and musical association with Dolphy was to last until the reedman's death.

Drummer Eddie Blackwell is definitely a prime candidate for the title of most neglected drummer in jazz history. His playing is rich with melodicism and interaction with his fellow musicians. Besides this short stint with Dolphy, he had spent most of his professional years sporadically appearing and recording with the groups of Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry until he joined Randy Weston's Quintet in 1967.

Fire Waltz was composed by Mal Waldron (another interesting version can be heard by Waldron, Dolphy and Booker Ervin on *The Quest* (PR 7579) in a sextet format). It is written in three-four meter at a time when that signature was not so commonplace. Dolphy on alto rips off dazzling lines punctuated by rests, bleeps and wide leaps. Toward the end of his solo, he adapts the nitty gritty honking style into his own vocabulary. Little is typically swift, lyrical and personal. Waldron is a rock, and his solo is so melodic that it contains at least a dozen potentially good, new compositions. Blackwell is at his peak juggling rhythms, anticipating and enhancing the melodies of the other players and always maintaining that essential pulse.

On Booker Little's *Bee Vamp*, Dolphy is on bass clarinet, and all the soloists are somewhat more subdued and concerned with the chordal suspensions. Waldron, who has worked with this system many times, is the most skillful in his shifting solo, actually achieving a sense of timelessness during the suspended sections. His use of low notes to pound out lyrical rhythms is reminiscent of the late Eddie Costa's work. Note also the cello-like quality of much of Richard Davis' work here.

Eric Dolphy wrote *The Prophet* for his painter-friend Richard Jennings. It is among the loping, Monkish tunes that he was so fond of writing and performing. This is a lengthy excursion which allows all five members of this co-operative unit to solo at length. Dolphy is on alto sax.

Any recording with Dolphy is important for his presence alone. And the small amount of material with such neglected giants as Mal Waldron, Booker Little and Eddie Blackwell is valuable and to be savored. The early work of Richard Davis is quite interesting to understand his development. Thus this recording is a valuable item from any point of view, and in no small way a significant part of jazz history by five giants involved in an historical musical meeting.

Notes: Michael Cuscuna (Jan. 1969)

Recording: Rudy Van Gelder

Supervision: Esmond Edwards

(This album was formerly cataloged as Prestige/New Jazz 8260).



Prestige

ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT, VOL I
ERIC DOLPHY

PRT 7611
STEREO

Side 1
PR 7611 A

1. FIRE WALTZ - 13:30
Mal Waldron
Tru-Sound Recording Corp/ASCAP
2. BEE VAMP - 13:00
Booker Little
(Pub. Unknown)

DISTRIBUTED BY FANTASY RECORDS, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA



Prestige

ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT, VOL I
ERIC DOLPHY

PRT 7611
STEREO

Side 2
PR 7611 B

1. THE PROPHET - 21:20
Eric Dolphy
Split Music Co./BMI

DISTRIBUTED BY FANTASY RECORDS, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA